

Chapter 4

EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FERRY

In order to effectively understand and evaluate the significance of the archaeological remains encountered during these activities within the framework of a National Register of Historic Places context, it is necessary to understand the current status of the Woodland Ferry with reference to the National Register and the characteristics that make it an eligible and/or contributing resource.

The Woodland Ferry was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. As can be observed to be the case with many early nominations made to the National Register of Historic Places, the documentation completed in support of the resource's listing was relatively brief and, unfortunately, lacked clear statements concerning the resource's significance and boundaries. However, it can be ascertained from these materials that the listed resource derived the weight of its significance as the site of a regionally important ferry crossing that has operated uninterrupted since the middle of the 18th century and that the resource includes within its bounds both the ferry landings on both sides of the Nanticoke River as well as the Cannon Hall property.

Cannon Hall, a residence historically associated with some of the most significant owners of the ferry operation, is clearly a National Register of Historic Places worthy resource, and it is easy to understand how, within a National Register of Historic Places context, the property's physical attributes; the house, its outbuildings and its grounds, contribute to its significance. It is less clear with reference to the infrastructure of the ferry itself, what tangible, physi-

cal, elements contribute to its historic significance. The National Register nomination form of 1973 provides little clarification. Superficially, few historic features survive. The ferry boats have been replaced many times over the life of the ferry, the current boat being less than fifty years in age, and the ferry slips were entirely rebuilt in the 1960s. It is possible that portions of the short earthen causeway leading from the high firm ground on the southern side of the Nanticoke River through the narrow river's edge marsh to the southern ferry slip may date to the 18th or 19th centuries but no other above-ground ferry related infrastructure of greater than fifty years in age survives at either ferry slip. The physical location of the boat landings seem to be the single most important character defining features with reference to the ferry as a contributing component of a National Register of Historic Places listed resource.

In 2007, the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office prepared an evaluation study of the eligibility of a much broader potential Woodland National Register historic district that would include not only the ferry crossing and Cannon Hall but also the rest of the riverside village that grew up on the north bank of the Nanticoke River around the ferry crossing (see Appendix G). The document argues that the historic character of the community at the intersection of these rural water and land transportation routes makes the district significant, and cites several periods of significance and state plan themes to support the eligibility determination. No specific mention is made of the physical features of the ferry, although the ferry crossing is included in the draft historic district boundary attached to the evaluation study.

B. EVALUATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

No archaeological deposits or artifacts identified by this study contribute in any meaningful way to the significance of either the Woodland Ferry as a National Register of Historic Places listed resource or to the National Register eligible Woodland Historic District.

The gradual, locally derived deposit (Context 4) identified in the Phase II investigation represents a layer of apparently domestic debris built up over an extended period of time, *circa* 1830 to 1960. Although these deposits may reflect day-to-day activities involved with operation of the Ferry and life in the community of Woodland during the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, because of their scant nature and non-stratified character, they are not considered to contribute to our understanding of either the National Register of Historic Places listed Woodland Ferry or the National Register eligible Woodland Historic District as per the stipulations of National Register criterion D.

Although these archaeological studies have not definitively documented any surviving physical evidence of historic ferry infrastructure, the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office has pointed out that it is premature to determine that no such remains survive, since the potential former bulkhead features identified by remote sensing have not yet been investigated, and the deposits on the Woodland side were not extensively tested since they did not fall within the Area of Potential Effect of the current undertaking. It should also be remembered that as a National Register of Historic Places-listed resource, the "Woodland Ferry" includes not only the ferry landings and the corridor by means of which the ferry reached the Nanticoke River but also Cannon Hall and that, additionally, the ferry lies within the National Register eligible Woodland Historic District. Undoubtedly, significant archaeological remains exist upon the Cannon Hall

property and scattered throughout the Village of Woodland. Thus the full archaeological significance of either the Woodland Ferry or the Woodland Historic District has not yet been evaluated and clearly lies outside of the present scope of work. It has, however, been demonstrated by the survey activities reported on herein that no significant archaeological resources will be affected by the current undertaking.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Although preliminary inspection of the remote sensing records reveals no potentially significant remote sensing targets, a program of manual underwater testing by archaeologists equipped with SCUBA equipment might be considered in future to detect and identify inundated or submerged cultural features along the shorelines that were not detectable with remote sensing equipment.
2. Areas outside the current APE should be archaeologically evaluated when circumstances permit, and certainly in the event of any Section 106-related undertaking.
3. No further archaeological investigation is necessary within the APE, since the undertaking will not affect significant archaeological resources.
4. As mitigation and treatment under 36CFR 800.6, the Delaware Department of Transportation will publish a booklet for general readership. The booklet will be designed as an attractive, well-illustrated product that will be of interest to the local community and to the wider public of Delaware with an interest in local history. The publication will address human interest (The Cannon family, slavery, modern ferry incidents, captains and crews), local history (Indians, colonial, the ferry through time), technology and transportation (ferry evolution, boats).

5. In a more general way, it is recommended that either the National Register documentation concerning the ferry completed in 1973 should be revised in order to provide more detail concerning the historical significance of the ferry, its period of significance and its character defining features or that the Woodland Historic District should be formally nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. This is not a suggestion that these activities should be required in connection with the current undertaking but rather a simple statement that a clarification of the resources' significance within a National Register of Historic Places context would be helpful in the event that future activities that may require regulatory review within a cultural resource framework impact either the ferry or the Village of Woodland.

The most relevant comparative contextual research encountered during this study is that by Edward Salo, of Brockington & Associates and Middle Tennessee State University, who presented a paper on the subject (Salo 2008) and is currently completing a dissertation on the role of the ferry in the development of South Carolina. The dissertation was not available at the time of writing but it is intended to be used in the writing of the booklet on the ferry.

At the National level, few historic ferries have been included in the National Register of Historic Places. The following entries have been identified, and may be useful during any future more detailed evaluation of the Woodland Ferry:

1. **Elkin's Ferry**, Arkansas, is listed because of the Civil War engagement that took place there.
2. **Lee's Ferry and Lonely Dell Ranch**, Coconino County, Arizona, was a Mormon ferry established in 1873 at an important crossing point of the Colorado River.
3. **Galivants Ferry Historic District**, Horry County, South Carolina, was placed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2001. The nomination does not include any specific ferry structures, but the overall significance evaluation is analogous to that proposed for Woodland Ferry.
4. The **Merrimac Ferry** in Sauk and Columbia Counties, Wisconsin, was determined eligible in 1974 as part of a DOT compliance project. A ferry crossing has been at this location since the 1840s, with multiple replacements of the ferry vessel (Amy Squitieri, Mead & Hunt pers. comm. May 2008; see also Wisconsin Department of Transportation 2006).